

Inspection of a good school: St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy

Aylesbury Road, Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST2 0LY

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 March 2022

Outcome

St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this caring school. Pupils are given roles and responsibilities that allow them to make a positive contribution to the school. For example, pupils are trained in basic first aid and can apply these skills if needed. Others have food hygiene training because they prepare bagels for breakfast, while other pupils are trained peer mediators who manage fall outs between pupils. Pupils have ambitions for themselves. They speak passionately about how their roles have encouraged them to think about their future careers, such as a doctor, teacher and builder.

Pupils are adamant that bullying does not happen because 'it is not tolerated here'. Pupils know that if bullying were to happen it would be thoroughly investigated and there would be consequences. Pupils are respectful and tolerant of differences. They celebrate that everyone is different.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils live up to these expectations. They behave well and work hard. They take pride in their work and present their work neatly. The curriculum is well designed to help pupils know and remember their learning.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Reading is central to the school's curriculum. Children in early years develop their vocabulary and listening skills quickly due to the language-rich curriculum. Leaders have carefully mapped out the vocabulary, stories and texts they want pupils to know and enjoy. They have ensured there is a variety of high-quality texts that enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils read 'First book of trains' when learning about toys and trains in Year 1.

Leaders use innovative ways to engage pupils in reading. Staff and pupils value the importance of sharing a book and make story time special. For example, older pupils read and act out stories to the younger children.

The teaching of phonics starts as soon as children join the Reception class. Leaders have implemented an ambitious phonics scheme that introduces children to phonics in a systematic way. However, on occasion the phonics activities are too hard. This means that pupils do not get the opportunity to practise the precise letter sounds they are learning.

The wider curriculum is very well planned. It is progressive and builds well on what pupils can already do. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn from the beginning of early years through to Year 6. Assessment is used well. Pupils who need additional support benefit from having key concepts and vocabulary taught to them before a lesson. Teachers use quizzes to check that pupils remember their learning. If they do not, learning is adapted accordingly.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and clearly illustrate mathematical concepts. This helps pupils to quickly grasp new learning. Occasionally, however, pupils do not always feel confident to use resources that may support their learning. This means that some pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

Pupils with SEND receive effective support. Teachers ensure they check what these pupils remember. Additional adults support pupils well in lessons. This means that interventions outside of the classroom are used sparingly when pupils need additional support.

Pupils behave really well. Breaktimes are harmonious. Pupils can take part in a huge range of activities. There is something for everyone. The activities include basketball, hockey, skipping, tennis, reading and drawing in the well-being garden, dance, gym equipment and art.

Clubs develop pupils' talents and interests. For example, in science club, pupils carry out purposeful science experiments in the school laboratory. Pupils and families are given the opportunity to learn new instruments together in the family orchestra.

Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance. They support parents of pupils who are regularly off school. As a result, attendance is improving. However, they acknowledge there is still work to do to get some regularly absent pupils into school more frequently.

Staff speak very positively about their workload and well-being. They value the recent training session about stress management and managing anxiety. Staff have thought of ways to support well-being, for example suggesting books to read for pleasure to colleagues and having weekly staffroom treats. Staff say leaders think about ways to minimise workload.

The trust and governors provide strong support to leaders and staff. For example, they give high-quality subject training and support for subject leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure pupils are safe. They develop strong relationships with families. Leaders use knowledge of family backgrounds to get to the heart of issues. Leaders work with external agencies and persevere to ensure children get the help they need at the right time.

School systems and procedures ensure all concerns are responded to quickly. Staff know these systems. One staff member said, 'It doesn't matter if it seems small, it all adds to a bigger picture.'

The curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep safe. The local police talk to pupils about gang culture and online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently help pupils learn and practise the new letter sounds they are learning. This is because some of the activities are too hard and pupils cannot access the learning independently. Staff need to make sure that the work they give to pupils in phonics is well matched to the letter sounds they want pupils to learn, so that pupils can read more fluently and confidently.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have the appropriate strategies to work independently, especially when they get stuck with the work. This means pupils must wait until they speak to a teacher before they can move on. Leaders need to ensure pupils learn different ways they can support their own independent learning, for example accessing resources that would help them, before asking the teacher.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Maria Goretti Catholic Primary School, to be good in September 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140298
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10200187
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anne Middleton-Hill
Principal	Zoe Cooper
Website	http://www.stmariagoretti.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy is a member of the All Saints Catholic Collegiate Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in November 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding team and checked safeguarding documents, including the checks made on staff. The inspector also examined documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.

- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff recorded in Ofsted’s online survey.
- The inspector also spoke with pupils informally during and after the school day.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body and the multi-academy company.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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